

Use of Computer in an EFL Writing Class

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Abstract

There is a steady and growing indication that EFL writing classes can be enhanced by use of computer technology. In fact, computer-assisted language learning (CALL) has much potential for helping learners to learn how to write but faced with a number of constraints that did not permit a ready adaptation of technology in the lessons. Hence, the aim of this study is to determine the learners' views of how useful and helpful the computers were in their ESL writing classes. The participants for the study (N=36) were studying intermediate English writing course in a university. The participants' perception was initially sought through open ended interview regarding their writing classes in which no computer had been used for the first two weeks. Then the participants were asked to send their writings to a special website created by using 'Yahoo! Education Courses'. This feature allowed the researcher to collect assignments on the Internet and respond to the learners via e-mail. The members of this virtual class could also post messages to each other. Comments were exchanged between the teacher and the participants via email. The results obtained from the post-session interview revealed that the participants' impression of computer use in the writing class was positive. Important observations were made from the study. Firstly, the participants, already familiar with computers, did not demonstrate a strong resistance to their teacher's efforts to 'computerize' the writing lessons. Secondly, many of the difficulties that they themselves identified as present in the non-CALL writing sessions appeared to be ameliorated. Thirdly, despite the largely favorable impression, one aspect of the teaching-learning process in this study was not perceived as 'improved by the computer'.